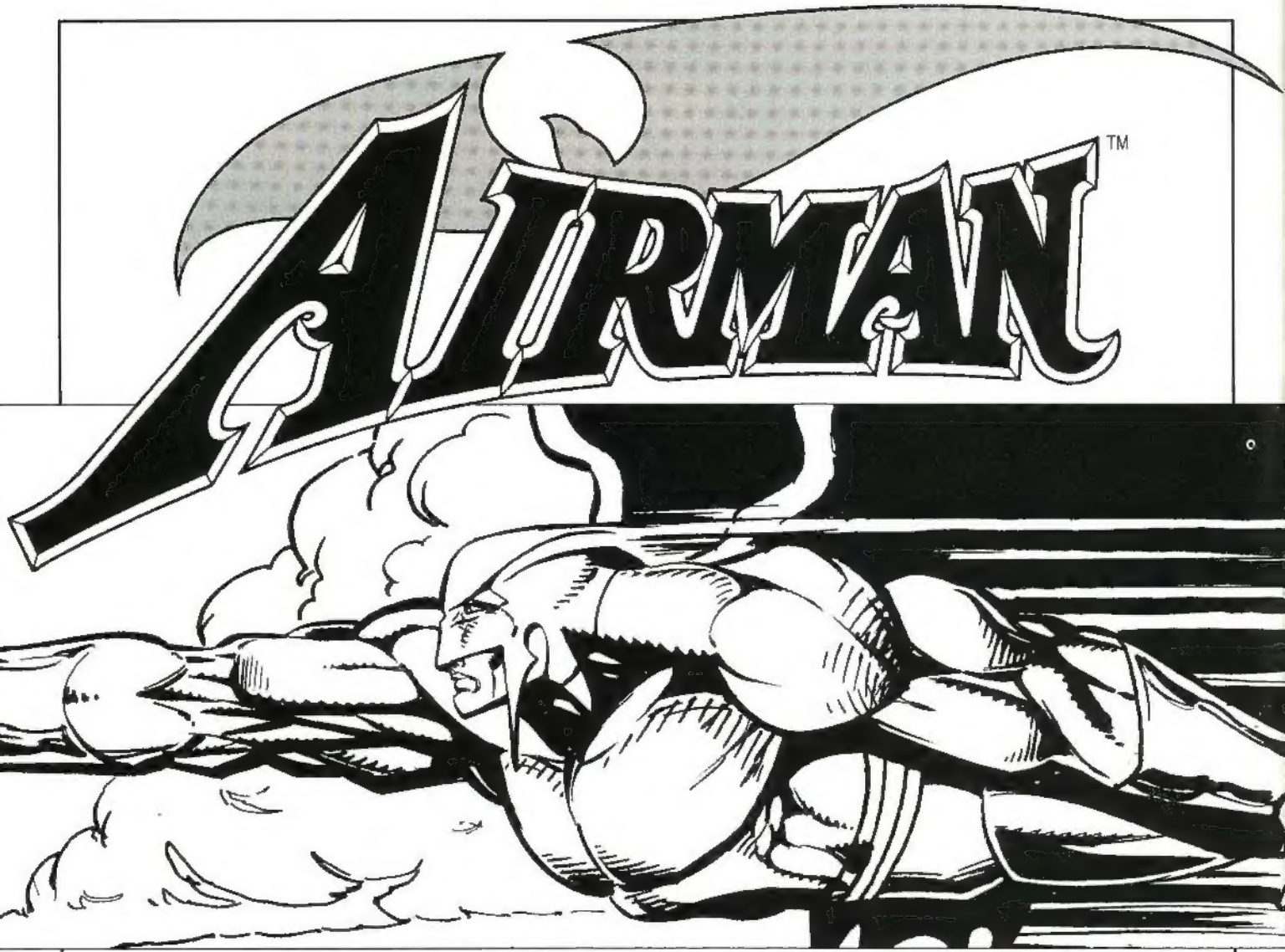
RIPPED FROM THE PAGES OF PROTECTORS!

AIRMAN™

AIRMAN VS. THE CONQUEROR

INTRODUCING THRESHER™



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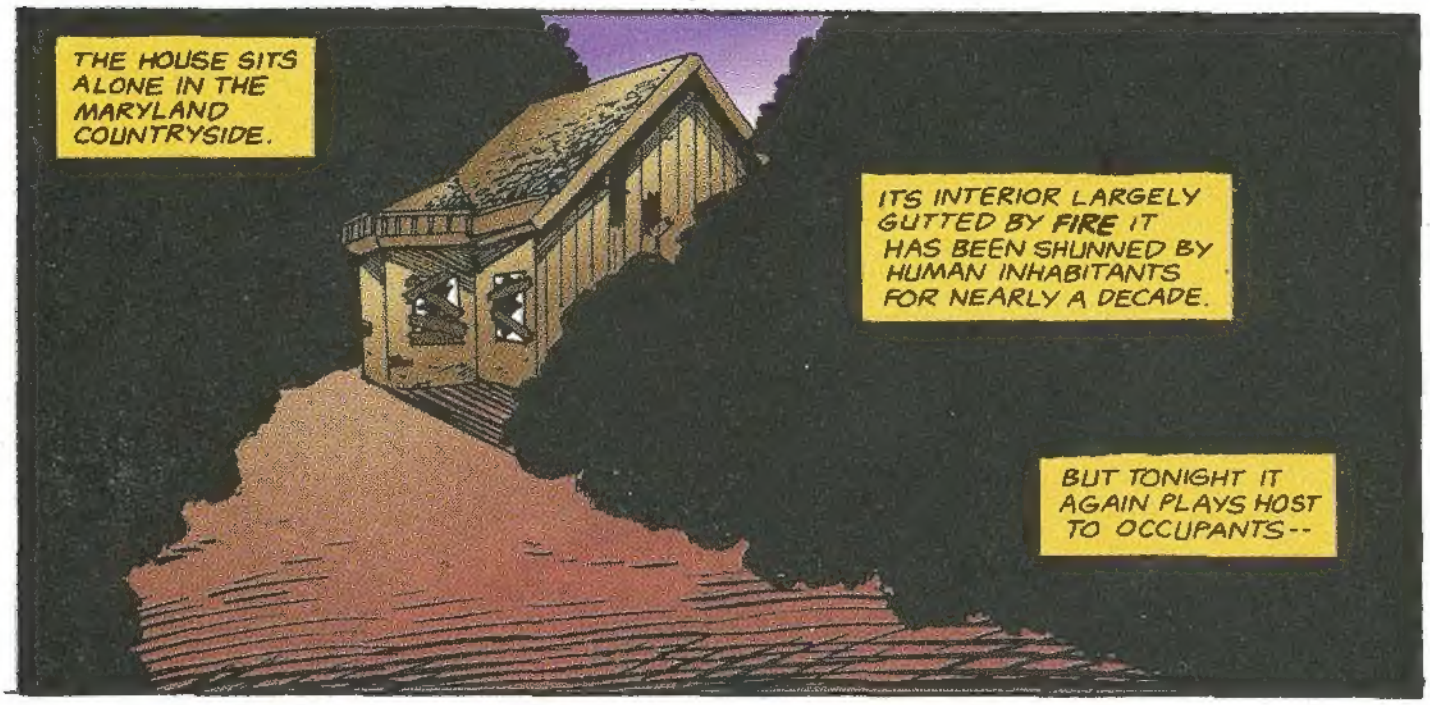

THE HOUSE SITS ALONE IN THE MARYLAND COUNTRYSIDE.
ITS INTERIOR LARGELY GUTTED BY FIRE IT HAS BEEN SHUNNED BY HUMAN INHABITANTS FOR NEARLY A DECADE.
BUT TONIGHT IT AGAIN PLAYS HOST TO OCCUPANTS--

--THOUGH THERE IS SERIOUS REASON TO DOUBT THEIR CLAIM TO HUMANITY.

LOOK AT IT, BOYS... $53,000! TAKEN FROM THE BIGGEST BANK IN WASHINGTON, D.C.-- IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.
YEAH. WE CAN SURE DO SOME FINE LIVIN' WITH THAT KIND'A JACK!

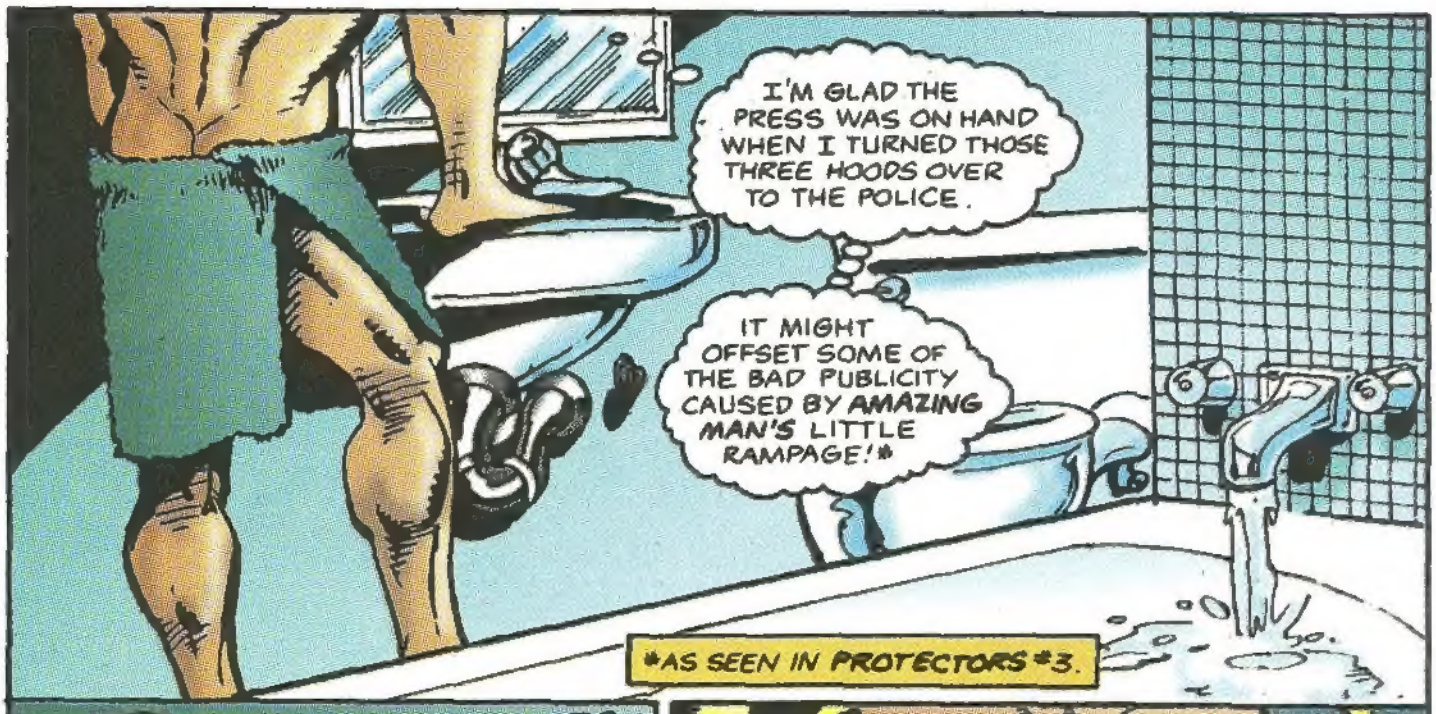
WE CAN DO MORE THAN THAT. WE CAN WRITE OUR OWN TICKET WITH ANY MOB IN THE COUNTRY NOW--
'CAUSE WE LIFTED IT RIGHT OUT FROM UNDER THE NOSES OF THEM PROTECTORS!

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW WRONG YOU ARE, MISTER.

AIRMAN
TM
BUT YOU'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT.
SHALL THE SEA GIVE UP HER SECRETS?

LIKE A GIANT BIRD OF PREY, AIRMAN DROPS FROM THE SCORCHED RAFTERS IN A ROARING WHOOSH OF WIND.
THE THREE THUGS CLAW FOR THEIR WEAPONS, IN HOPE THEY CAN DOWN THIS WINGED TERROR.
KRAKK!
IT IS A HOPE BORN OF OVER-WHELMING FEAR.
A DESPERATE HOPE--
WHUMP!
KRNNCH!
A HOPE DASHED IN MERE SECONDS.
WITH MY ENHANCED VISION, IT WAS EASY TO SPOT THEIR LICENSE NUMBER AND TRAIL THEM HERE.
THERE'LL BE SOME MIGHTY HAPPY DEPOSITORS AT THE BANK TOMORROW--
AND THAT'S JUST THE SORT OF PUBLIC GOODWILL THE PROTECTORS NEED.

DRAKE STEVENS' SPRAWLING HOME NEAR ROCK CREEK PARK IS SURROUNDED BY ACRES OF FORESTRY.
IT ENABLES HIM TO BE CLOSER TO THE NATURE HE LOVES SO WELL.
AND IT PROTECTS HIM FROM THE PRYING EYES OF NEIGHBORS--
--WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE DISCOVER THAT HE IS SECRETLY AIRMAN.
I ALMOST HATE TO TAKE OFF THE WINGS --THEY GIVE ME SUCH A FEELING OF FREEDOM.
IT'S JUST GREAT TO BE BACK IN UNIFORM AGAIN.
CRACKLE
THOUGH I DO WORK UP ONE HECK OF A SWEAT INSIDE IT!
NO QUESTION ABOUT IT--
I AM ONE BIRD IN DIRE NEED OF A BATH!


I'M GLAD THE PRESS WAS ON HAND WHEN I TURNED THOSE THREE HOODS OVER TO THE POLICE.
IT MIGHT OFFSET SOME OF THE BAD PUBLICITY CAUSED BY AMAZING MAN'S LITTLE RAMPAGE!*
*AS SEEN IN PROTECTORS #3.

BLORP!
BETWEEN HIM AND FERRET --WE'LL HAVE A HARD TIME MAINTAINING A CLEAN IMAGE.

WHAT WAS THAT...?

GOOD LORD!
GLUUB!

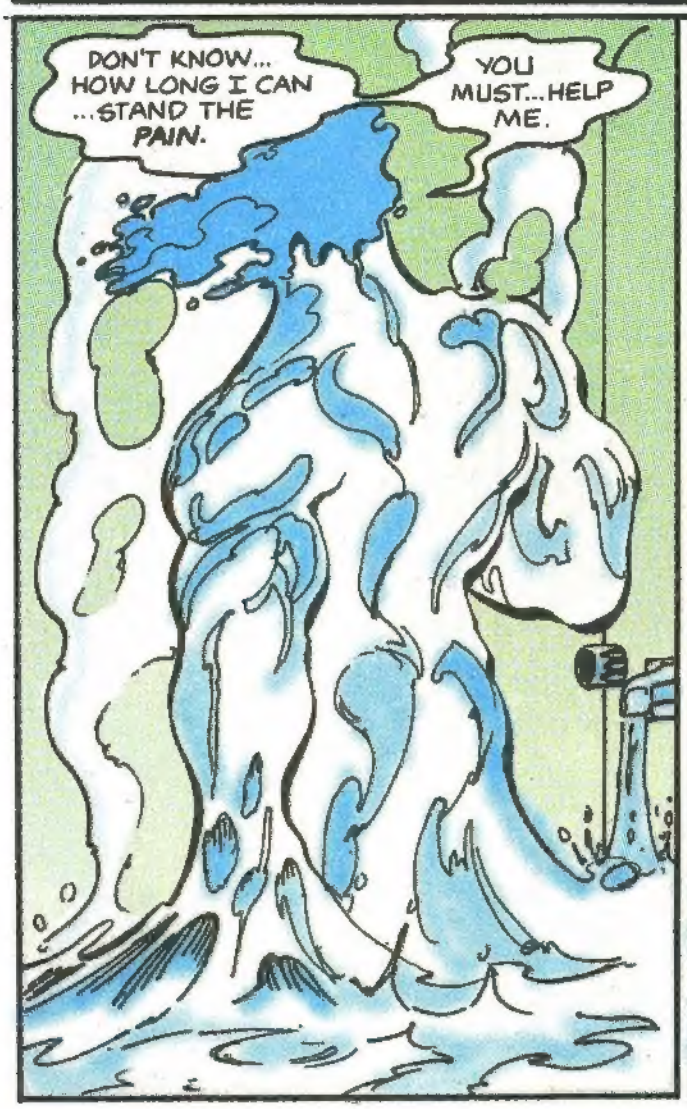
BURBLE!

DRA-AKE...?

DRAKE...
I... NEED YOU.

THRESHER!
IS THAT YOU?

I'M... BEING HELD... PRISONER.
APPROXIMATELY 74 DEGREES LATITUDE AND 30 DEGREES LONGITUDE.


DON'T KNOW... HOW LONG I CAN ...STAND THE PAIN.
YOU MUST...HELP ME.

HELP... MEEEEEE...
GOOSH!
THRESHER IS THE ONLY PERSON I KNOW WHO CAN MAKE IMAGES OF HIMSELF.
IF HE'S ASKING ME FOR HELP, HE'S GOT TO BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE.

AT THE DOCKS IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA, AFTER A QUICK PHONE CALL...
I WISH I DIDN'T HAVE TO GET THIS BOAT, BUT IT'S TOO FAR FOR ME TO FLY UNDER MY WING POWER.
ORCA
THANKS FOR LETTING ME COME DOWN SO EARLY, CAPN HENRY.
MY PLEASURE, SON. ALWAYS GLAD TA RENT YOU A BOAT.
AND GLAD TA SEE YA TAKIN' SOME EQUIPMENT ALONG WITH YA THIS TIME.
ORCA
I SAID ALL ALONG YOU WEREN'T NEVER GONNA LAND NO SHARK WITHOUT FISHING GEAR!
AS ALWAYS -- YOU WERE RIGHT, CAP'N.
AND THIS TIME -- I THINK I HAVE JUST THE GEAR I NEED TO FIND WHAT I'M LOOKING FOR.
NAMELY--MY WINGS, AND THE AZIMUTH COMPASS TO FIND HIS LOCATION.
"I JUST HOPE I REACH HIM IN TIME."

THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, TINY ISLANDS DOT THE OCEAN. TOO SMALL TO APPEAR ON ANY CHARTS... TO EVEN BEAR NAMES.
ONE SUCH ISLAND IN THE ATLANTIC HOUSES ONLY BARREN ROCK--AND A FOREBODING FORTRESS.
LISTEN, AND YOU CAN HEAR THE SOUND OF WAVES SPLASHING AGAINST ITS SHORES... GULLS SCREECHING IN ITS SKIES...
AND THE SCREAMS OF A MAN IN AGONIZING PAIN.
AAAAAAGH!!
ARCS OF ELECTRICITY TEAR THROUGH HIS CONVULSING BODY LIKE SAW-TOOTHED BLADES.
FOR DAYS ON END, THE SUPRANORMAL KNOWN AS THRESHER HAS ENDURED THIS HEARTLESS TORTURE.
THE IDEA OF DYING HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY ATTRACTIVE TO HIM. BUT LIFE AND DEATH ARE NOT HIS TO CONTROL.
THAT POWER LIES IN THE HANDS OF ONE MAN--

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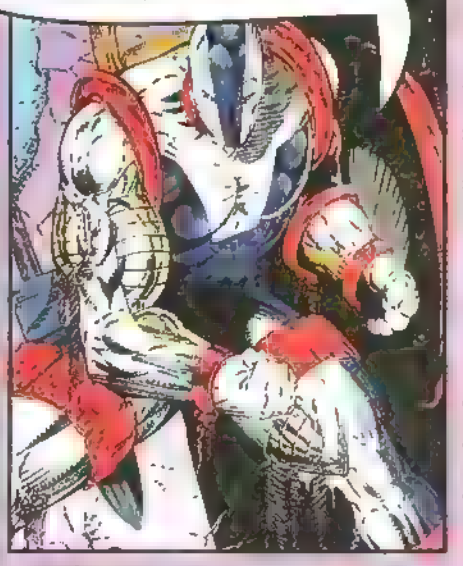

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Introducing a hot new team of superheroes from Jim Lee & Scott Clark!

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For every 50 copies, you get a free limited glow-in-the-dark Maxx #1!

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Contains all 4 polybagged annuals which include different rookie cards!

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Contains all 5 issues! Save money!

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Order 40 or more Turok #1 & get a free limited Turok Chromium card

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All new 64 page X-Men series!

Marvel™ Spiderman™ Shield™, Venom™, Cable™, Cyclops™ & X-Men™ and © Marvel Entertainment Group, 1993. All rights reserved.

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Highlighted by an embossed silver foil cover! Hot!

Reg./ Sale

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All new superhero team from Larry Stroman & Image!

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Highlighted by a chromium embossed foil cover, Turok #1 will be Valiant's next big hit!!!

VALIANT

Reg./ Sale

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Hard Corps #7,8 features 1st Hot Shot!

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Solar battles Master Darque! **Red hot!**

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X-O 17,18 (Bob Layton) 2.25/1.75
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The hottest babes by the hottest artists!

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Violent superhero series by Stroman!

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New series by Rob Liefeld & Joe Lee!

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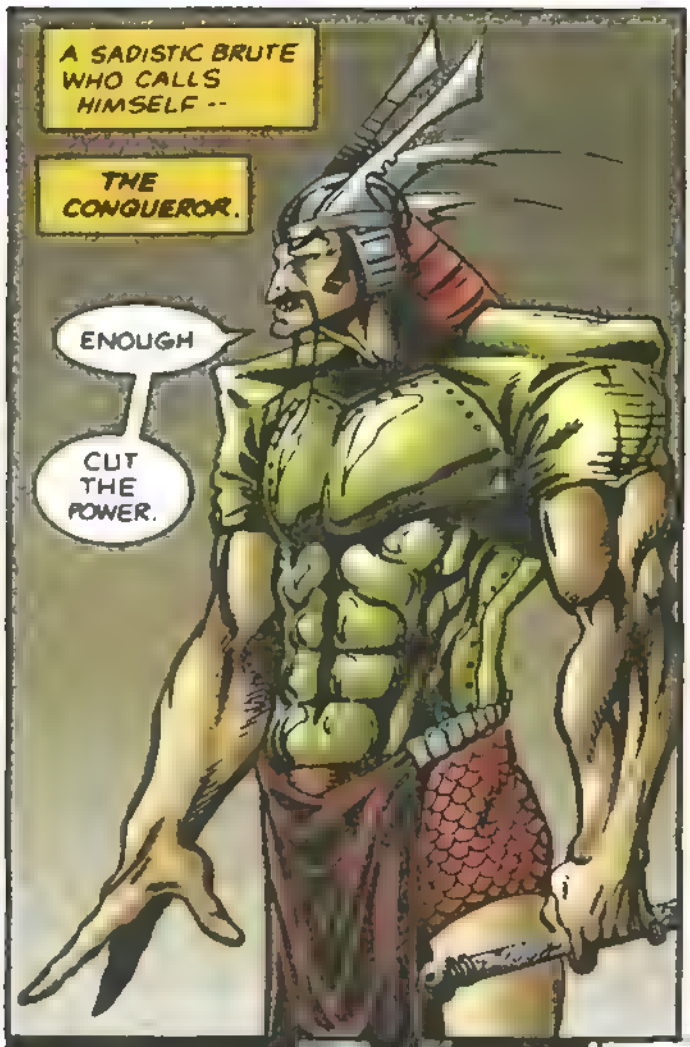
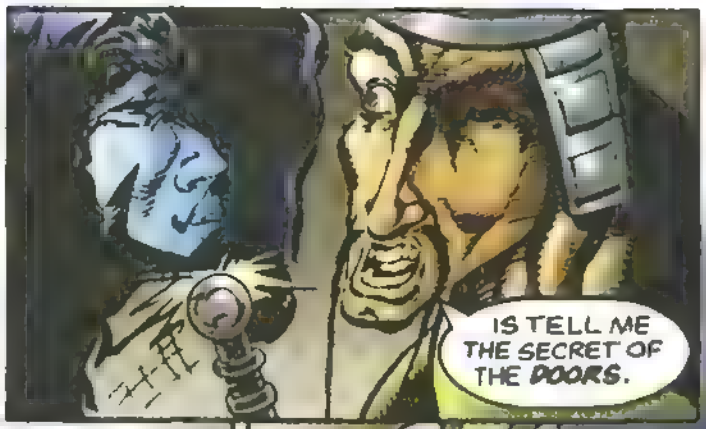
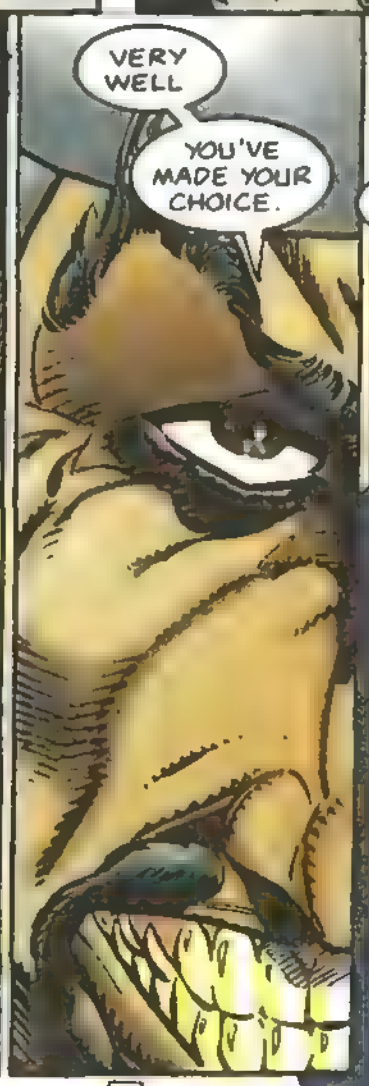

A SADISTIC BRUTE WHO CALLS HIMSELF --
THE CONQUEROR.
ENOUGH
CUT THE POWER.

THIS TORMENT DOESN'T HAVE TO GO ON, THRESHER. YOU CAN END IT NOW.
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO --


IS TELL ME THE SECRET OF THE DOORS.

HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU --
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!?


VERY WELL
YOU'VE MADE YOUR CHOICE.

RESUME THE SHOCKS.
AND DON'T STOP UNTIL HE BEGS TO TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW

LATER THAT DAY
NOTHING!
THIS IS THE SPOT, THRESHER. IT MUST NOT BE THE RIGHT PLACE...
...THERE'S NOT A SIGN OF ANY ISLAND--ANY SHIP WHERE HE MIGHT BE HELD.
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE CALLED IN THE REST OF THE TEAM TO HELP ME. THEY ALL HAVE GREATER POWER THAN I DO.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY I FELT I NEEDED TO DO THIS ALONE.
BESIDES, THRESHER IS MY FRIEND .. EVEN THOUGH I NEVER SAW HIM AFTER THAT AWFUL DAY IN BRINKSTON.
AND NOT JUST THRESHER...
I SHUT MYSELF OFF FROM ALL OF THEM--FOR TOO LONG
I OWE IT TO HIM TO--
WHA--?!
B-WUMP!

SOMETHING STRUCK THE BOAT-- BELOW THE WATER LINE!
WHAT COULD HAVE--?
"SHARKS!"
"GREAT WHITES--A WHOLE SCHOOL OF THEM. THAT'S NOT NORMAL. NOT NORMAL AT ALL."
THRESHER CAN COMMUNICATE WITH SHARKS— I REMEMBER THAT
COULD HE HAVE SENT THEM TO ME-- AS SOME SORT OF SIGNAL?
THEY'RE SWIMMING AWAY FROM ME...ALL IN THE SAME DIRECTION.
I WAS RIGHT!
LEAD ON, FELLAS--I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU!

BACK ON THE ISLAND, THE GULLS NO LONGER SCREECH...
THE MAN NO LONGER SCREAMS
ONLY THE LAPPING WAVES CONTINUE TO MAKE NOISE--
FOR DESPAIR MAKES NO SOUND.
THE ENERGY COURSING THROUGH THESE MANACLES... KEEPS ME FROM REGAINING MY STRENGTH.
I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER I CAN HOLD OUT.
NEPTUNE ...YOU WHO FATHERED ME...
PLEASE HEED MY PRAYER.
I HAVE DONE NOTHING TO DESERVE THIS ...HARMED NO MAN OR BEAST.
I BEG YOU... DELIVER ME FROM MY ENEMIES.
IT'S NO USE ;SOB;
HE CAN'T HEAR ME!

MAYBE YOUR GOD ISN'T IN A POSITION TO HELP YOU, OLD FRIEND--
WHO--?
BUT WOULD YOU SETTLE FOR A GUARDIAN ANGEL!
AIR MAN! I DIDN'T THINK I HAD REACHED YOU WITH MY MESSAGE!
I READ YOU LOUD AND CLEAR-- THEN JUST WAITED FOR COVER OF NIGHTFALL TO MAKE MY MOVE.
NOW LET'S GET YOU OUT OF THAT CELL.
TINY, YET POWERFUL SERVO-MOTORS ENABLE AIR MAN'S TOED BOOTS TO WRAP AROUND THE BARS OF THE CELL WINDOW
AND HIS MIGHTY WINGS DO THE REST!
SKRRETCH!

YES!
NOW NOTHING STANDS BETWEEN ME--
AND THE SEA!
I'VE BEEN RETURNED TO YOU, MY BROTHERS.
NOW LISTEN TO ME--
AND SET ME FREE!
KA-AAWNG!

WITH THE CHAINS BROKEN, THE MANACLES LOSE THEIR POWER AND ARE EASILY REMOVED. THEN--
THAT'S BETTER, THRESHER, PRISON DOESN'T BECOME YOU.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, DRAKE.
YES. I JUST WISH THE CIRCUMSTANCES HAD BEEN DIFFERENT. WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
I WAS AMBUSHED AND CAPTURED A WEEK AGO... BY SOME MADMAN I NEVER SAW BEFORE
THEN WE HAVE TWO OPTIONS, AS I SEE IT. WE ESCAPE ...OR WE ATTACK.
I'LL LEAVE THE CALL TO YOU.
YOU KNOW I'VE NEVER RUN FROM AN ENEMY BEFORE.
I DON'T INTEND TO START NOW.

AAA-OOOGA!
AAA-OOOGA!
AAA-OOOGA!
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
IT'S--IT'S THE PRISONER, SIR. HE'S ESCAPED! WE'RE NOT SURE HOW.
I DON'T CARE HOW! BUT I WANT HIM BACK--
NOW!
BADOOM!

THE CONQUEROR!
NO--THAT CAN'T BE HIM! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!
YOU WANT ME, LAND-CRAWLER?
YOU GOT ME!

EXCELLENT. NOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO LOOKING FOR HIM.
I WANT HIM BROUGHT DOWN ALIVE.
LT JADEN
AND WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER ONE?
HE'S OF NO USE TO ME.
KILL HIM.
ZREEE!
ZREEE!
¡UUUHH!¿
ZEE-OOO!
ZEE-OOO!
GRRNCH!
SHKRAKAAK!

KA-ZAK!
I'M HIT!
IT'LL TAKE A MOMENT TO COMPENSATE-- STABILIZE MY FLIGHT--
BUT RIGHT NOW--I CAN ACCOMPLISH MORE WITH A FREEFALL!
SKRASH!
DRAKE'S FIGHTING SKILLS DON'T SEEM TO HAVE DIMINISHED ANY. I WONDER HOW LONG HE'S BEEN BACK AT IT.
IT'S JUST LIKE OLD TIMES!
ZREEE!
ZREEE!
THU-WHOMP!

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SUCH IS HIS SPEED THAT HIS ARTIFICIAL WINGS STRIKE WITH THE FORCE OF TWIN BLUDGEONS.
HIS FOES FALL LIKE STALKS OF GRASS. OR LIKE --
CANNON FODDER.
MY POOR MEN DON'T HAVE A CHANCE OF WINNING.
KA-KLIK!
AND I WOULD BE THEIR NEXT TARGET--
IF I WAS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO LINGER.
WHRRRRR!
AIR MAN!
WHERE DID THE CONQUEROR SLINK OFF TO?
EXCERCISING THE BETTER PART OF VALOR, IT APPEARS.
IF YOU CAN FINISH MOPPING UP THINGS DOWN HERE, THRESHER-

"I'LL TRY TO CLIP OUR PIGEON'S WINGS!"
HE'S GOT TOO BIG A HEAD START. MY WINGS ALONE--ESPECIALLY DAMAGED--AREN'T STRONG ENOUGH TO CATCH UP TO HIM.
ONLY ONE CHANCE--
MY AUXILIARY JET PACK!
RRRRR
RRROOOOOOSH!

HE'S GAINING ON US.
FASTER, YOU IDIOT-- CLIMB!
IT'S ALL OR NOTHING.
THE JET PACK'S ENERGY CELL IS ONLY CAPABLE OF A SHORT BURST OF ACCELERATION.
A FEW SECONDS IS ALL I HAVE IN WHICH TO CATCH HIS CHOPPER.
ALMOST THERE YES.
SPUT-SPUT
THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO... HE'S FREE.
NOOOOO!
SPLOOSH!!

MEANWHILE-- BACK ON THE ISLAND--
FASTER! WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY FROM THAT SUPRANORMAL FREAK!
RELAX--
RRRMMMM!

"--HE CAN'T TOUCH US NOW!"
WHSSSH!

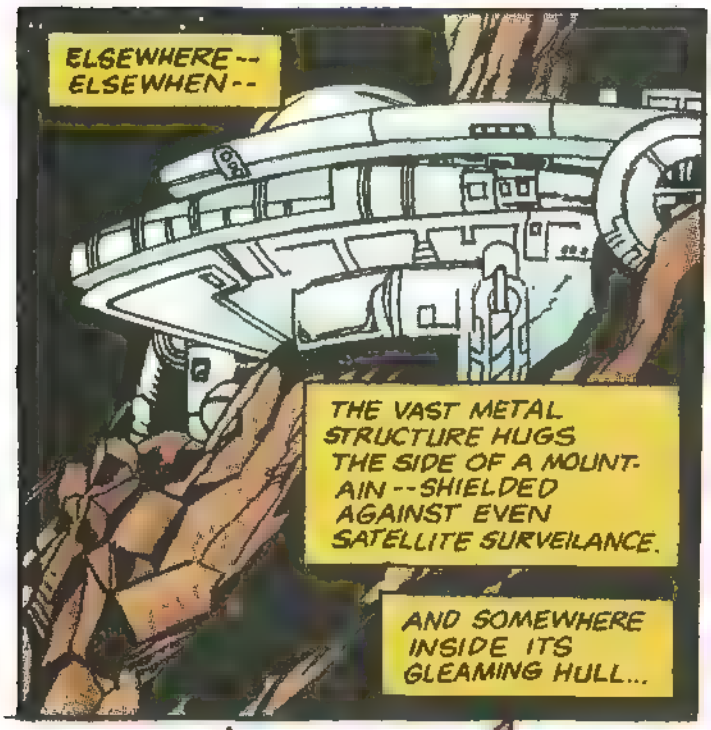
CH-FOOOM!

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?
JUST HOPE HE DOESN'T COME AFTER US.
AS LONG AS HE REMAINS ON THE ISLAND--

"WE SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT."

YAAAAAGH!

THE CONQUEROR GOT AWAY, THRESHER I'M SORRY.
WERE YOU ABLE TO TAKE OUT THE REST OF HIS ARMY?
YES.
WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS.
GOOD. AND MAYBE THE REST OF THE PROTECTORS CAN HELP TRACK DOWN THEIR LEADER.
WHAT IS THE PROTECTORS?
I GUESS YOU HAVEN'T HEARD. SEVERAL OF US HAVE BANDED TOGETHER AS A TEAM.
WE'RE WORKING UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT NOW.
I HAVE SOME PERSONAL BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF, DRAKE -- BUT I'D LIKE TO MEET WITH THIS TEAM OF YOURS.
CAN YOU ARRANGE IT?
OF COURSE. WHY?
I'M NOT CERTAIN--
BUT I THINK I MAY HAVE INFORMATION THEY'LL WANT TO HEAR!


ELSEWHERE -- ELSEWHEN --
THE VAST METAL STRUCTURE HUGS THE SIDE OF A MOUNTAIN -- SHIELDED AGAINST EVEN SATELLITE SURVEILANCE.
AND SOMEWHERE INSIDE ITS GLEAMING HULL...

I WON'T MAKE ANY EXCUSES. I FAILED IN MY MISSION.
NOTHING REMAINED BUT TO REPORT BACK TO YOU--

--GREAT QUESTION.
I'M DISAPPOINTED IN YOU, CONQUEROR --BUT NOT COMPLETELY SURPRISED.

BUT MY ULTIMATE PLAN WILL STILL MOVE FOREWARD.
AND THE SWEETEST IRONY OF ALL --

IS THAT THE PROTECTORS THEMSELVES WILL AID ME!
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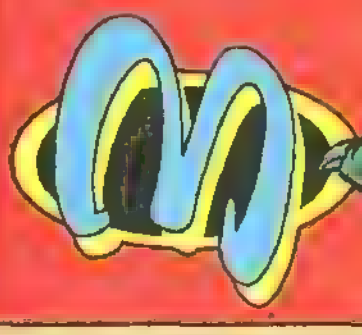

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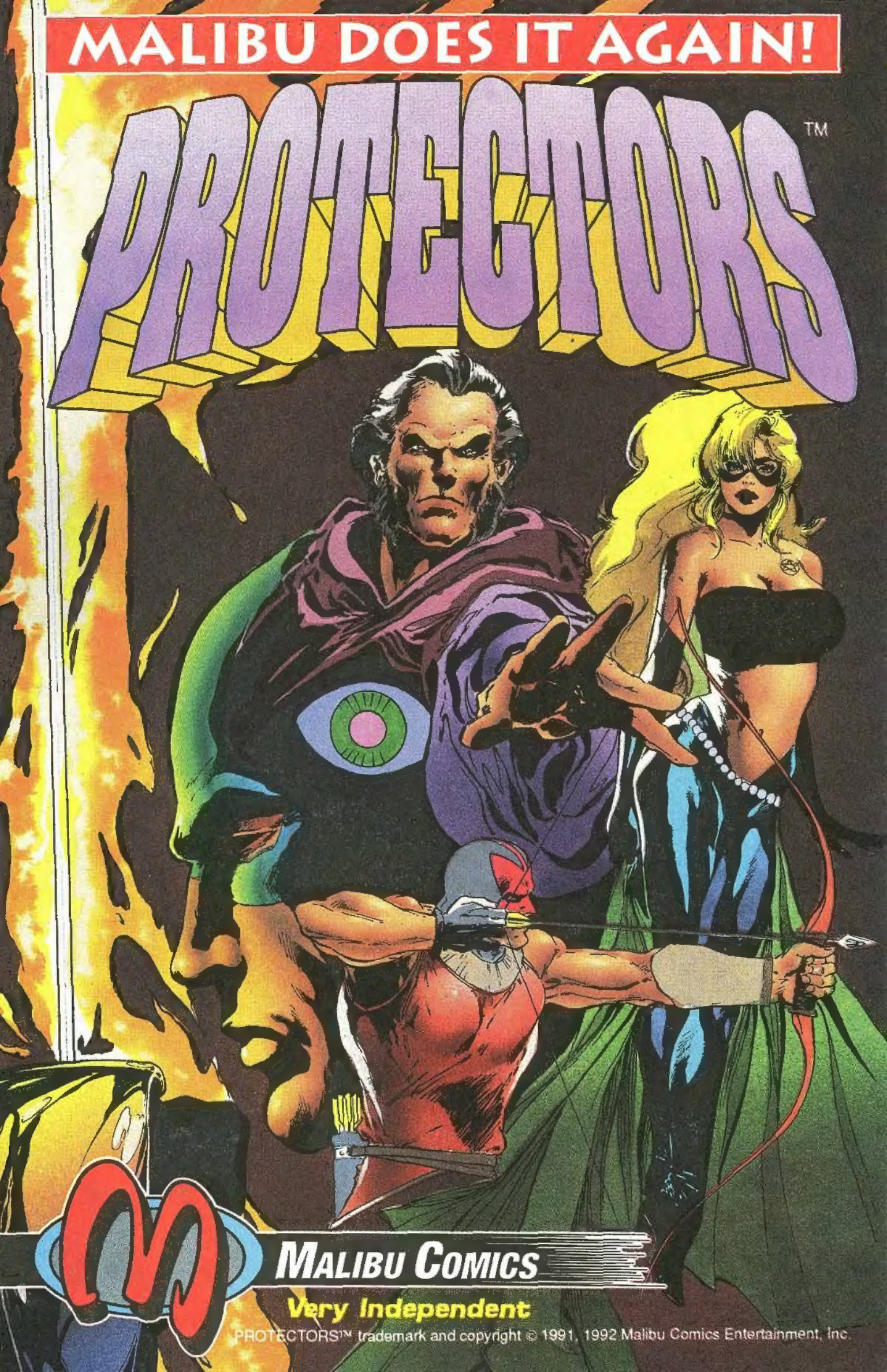

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What are your favorites in the world of comics? **Comics Buyer's Guide**, the weekly newspaper devoted to the world of comic books, sponsors these awards to let you, the reader, cast your ballot in determining what the fan favorites are for the year.

Rules & Regulations: Only material with a 1992 cover date can win. Votes for projects that did not have a 1992 publication date will not be counted. This ballot may be copied and passed on to your friends for their votes. Anyone who loves comics can vote – but only vote once. If you vote more than once, ALL your votes will be thrown out. Vote only in the categories you want, and ignore any you don't. **Comics Buyer's Guide** is not eligible for Category 15. Every CBG voter in the United States will get a free issue of **Comics Buyer's Guide** with the results (scheduled to be #1029, dated August 6, 1993), unless you already have a current subscription to **CBG**. Votes from other countries will be counted, but we regret that free copies of **CBG** can't be mailed out of the country unless your vote is accompanied by $3.00 in U.S. funds to cover handling and shipping. The award winners will be announced at the Atlanta Comics Expo, held July 16-18, 1993.

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